# Component #1 Needs, Goals & Objectives

**Title of your Group Program: Assertiveness Training**

Two data sources used for the group facilitation include The University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill program called LEARN NC, a program of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill [School of Education](http://soe.unc.edu), which finds the most innovative and successful practices in K–12 education and makes them available to the teachers and students of North Carolina and the world to improve academics, solving conflicts, and inter personal relationships within schools. Within this program Nicki Neumann designed a lesson plan teaching students titled [Assertiveness for students](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/3562?ref=search). This lesson introduced middle school students to assertive behavior as a tool for dealing with disagreements or conflicts with others. The lesson plan was completed on working with middle school students in North Carolina in improving academic and reducing conflicts by understanding and exploring the concept of assertiveness. They reported with increased assertiveness from the counselor, students were able to reduce conflicts in school, acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and interpersonal skills to help understand and respect self and others, examine personal boundaries, rights, and privacy needs as well as understanding that communication involves speaking, listening, and nonverbal behavior.

This adheres to the standards of North Carolina curriculum K-12 as well as standards for the guidance counselors, this will be further explored in the group setting, and questions will be asked about how assertiveness plays a role and how or what people’s perceptions are of themselves and others. This will assist in closing the gap by reducing conflicts, increasing confidence, and academics with the use of assertiveness training. Your voice and feelings matter too, and if you can communicate that you can be a better student, and feel better.

The second source is the report by The Consortium to Prevent School Violence, (2008) which states, “school-based anger management interventions have proliferated in recent years and encompass a wide range of treatment strategies. School wide efforts to prevent anger-related problems assist all students in identifying and managing angry feelings, challenging anger-provoking beliefs and attitudes, and learning alternatives to aggression.” (CPSV). Assertive training is just that, an alternative to aggression, and more focused on improving communication skills.

Lastly, the Zung Self-Anxiety Scale, anxiety is defined as a state of uneasiness and apprehension, as about future uncertainties. Students with anxiety may appear shy, worried and concerned, withdrawn, scared, feel guilty about missed opportunities, appear uncomfortable in their own skin, lack confidence and it states there are various levels of anxiety and that assertiveness training could help mild to moderate anxiety. These reports and data sources addressed a need for students in school to reduce these barriers and learn new ways of communicating and getting one’s needs and voice heard. Addressing these concerns could improve a student’s success in school and life. An additional study which tied into anxiety discussed how teachers in Canada led a conference and worked with education students to reduce anxiety to increase a more productive academic and healthy life as well as reducing anxieties when talking to parents of students. Their findings reported improved communication and confident talk (assertion).

**Population**

The group will consist of co-ed middle school students in 6th through 8th grade, ages ranging from 10 to 13. These students would have scored high on the screening test. So, those students who appeared as loners, lacked confidence, or experienced guilt and or avoided confrontations were selected. Those scoring high for anxiety (more than 70%) would also be selected and lastly those who scored high in the areas of passivity and or aggression were also chosen.

**Recruitment and Screening**

The recruitment process involved responding to posted flyers. Letters informing parents a new group would be starting about assertiveness. Once students met the criteria parents and guardians were contacted, informed about the group, informed that their child was interested. Once the parents agreed and signed off for their participation in the group students were accepted into the group. The letters were then sent out giving families and students the full details of the group, including objectives, goals, and duration of the group. Students who responded to not being heard, suffering academically due to distractions of daily school life including (social anxiety, stress, and inability to say no ) as well as overly shy, feeling guilty when saying “no” and teacher’s input about student’s who appeared withdrawn, nervous, picked on, and who appeared as a push-over were also selected.

The screening process included feedback and input from teachers, and school administers. Those students who appeared as loners, lacked confidence, or scored poorly on test, or experienced guilty and or avoided confrontations were selected. Also a clinical test was included which tested anxiety levels. Those scoring highly were also chosen. Lastly a pre-test about “what would you do and why” it looked for trends in passivity, or aggression, those who scored highly were chosen to participate in the group.

**Group Structure**

# This is a small closed psychoeducational group, consisting of middle schooled students, ranging from 6th to 8th grade. The group will run for 4 weeks and be offered two times a week in room 128, Ms. Griggs room from 10:30 to 11:15a.m. The group will consist of 10 children, ages ranging from 11 to 13 years old. The group will be co-ed and culturally diverse, consisting of American Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Caucasians, and African Americans. The group will meet 40 to 45 minutes depending on the needs of the school. The title of the group is Using my “I” statement… I do matter! The last 3 to 5 minutes (depending on the group’s energy and need) after closing will end with a stretching activity, or relaxation skill. The group leader will be a guidance counselor or early childhood educator.

2. The academic need (which is a critical-incident need) for the school would be to improve communication within the school in doing this as stated by ( ) “it will allow students to focus more on their academic future and alleviate some of the emotional, social and behavioral barriers to student success and the school-wide environmental conditions that interfere”. If students could be confident about using their voice and being heard and others understand assertiveness as being honest, honoring yourself, and standing up for one’s rights anxiety can be reduced. Enrolling in this group would give those students “courage” who need it and provide a mentoring partnership for those who have the skill and want to help others, and counseling and support for those who fall in communication styles they rather not (ex. Aggressive).

The **goal** therefore would be to teach students with the use of “I” statements, and self-expression through which one stands up for his or her basic rights without denying rights of others and without experiencing undue anxiety or guilt as well as increasing academic confidence if needed. Every voice is entitled to be heard especially when it relates to them while reducing anger and anxiety, so in keeping in line with one of the school’s mission the group will participate in Bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy promotes reinforcing literacy skills, by incorporating and assigning literary books to assist students in standing up for their rights…finding their voice and communicating. This is also blending academics with school counseling which is also a mission of the school. It is important to continue to address promoting assertiveness training/programs to close the gap between poor communication, passive behaviors, anxiety, conflicts and academic involvement. Therefore assertiveness training can be useful in everyday situations, especially in reducing angry feelings, conflicts, anxiety, and aggression. On the other end it also can promote confidence, empower students, and create a less interrupted academic school year.

3. Measurable objectives for Session One

1. In maintaining the Counseling Content the student will strengthen one’s assertiveness skills when communicating in addressing uncomfortable or perceived confrontational situations 2 out of 3 times through role play, teacher’s observations and graph. (e.g. disagreements with others, differing of opinion(s), avoiding others, expressing self, and speaking up for one‘s self).
2. In maintaining the Mathematical Content, the student will analyze their solutions, then calculate using basic mathematical skills and determine areas for improvements.

4. Measurable objectives for Session Two

1. In maintaining the School counseling content the student will communicate using “I”

statements to express differences or to assert one’s self appropriately 4 out of 5 times.

2. In maintaining the Language Arts content, the student will use/read literature to help

students cope with dilemmas that affect their academic, career, and personal-social

development in one group setting. (Also known as Bibliotheraphy).

5. The data sources proved that this was a need, it is important to understand how the data driven results relate to the current and future needs. If one does not take in account the results of the finding things will get worse. In breaking down the results of previous studies academic anxiety is an important educational problem that affects millions of students in colleges and schools over the world each year. Although a low level of anxiety can cause positive motivation for improvement of educational functioning, high levels of it can cause a disturbance in concentration, attention, storage of knowledge, recall and educational reduction. It has also been recently determined that there is a relationship between anxiety and assertiveness. (Sharifirad, 2012). The data also measured those who struggled academically due to barriers which included problems of anxiety, emotional, and social-personal problems. With the use of questionnaires, surveys, and graphs the need was confirmed, which is learning to be assertive, this assertion would carry from standing up for one’s rights without stepping on others, reducing stress, anxiety, and or loathing feelings about self, as well as reducing conflicts, increasing academics, to emotional-social and personal well being. In keeping in line with the mission statement these needs are right on track.

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# Component # 2 Research-Supported and Standards-based Content

Steps to the Group Process

Introduction and Welcome: (what the group will be about and questions, perceptions)

Hello, welcome to “Using my “I” statement…I do matter. Leader(s) would introduce themselves. Then students introduce self and give one like and dislike and what we think group is going to be like.

Materials Needed:

Group rules, magic wand, worksheets, quiz, books, index cards

Group rules and Ground rules:

Group leader will ask input from group members to help establish rules. Then discuss other rules, such as:

You maintain confidentiality at all times; eventually you will have to talk; there is no fighting.

There is no scape-goating or teasing; attendance is a must, can’t miss more than two meetings.

No one speaks unless holding the magic marker. You must voluntarily agree to be a member and be respectful.

# Duration of group:

40 to 45 minutes

# Preparing Children for the Group Experience:

Here the counselor/leader would role-play what the group would be like (examples of good and bad behavior) observe their reactions. Ask for their input the positives and negatives, ask what they thought was wrong and what they thought was right. Then give a description of the format and structure. The students will also complete the Zung Self-Anxiety Scale.

Ice Breaker Game; Quiz

What was your reaction like? What did you want to say or do? Some of you were exhibiting anxious behaviors, nonverbal aggressive behaviors (rolling eyes, cutting eyes, folded arms to express displeasure, sucking teeth, and or inappropriate finger gestures and mumbling under breathe)

Group Process Starts with a Question… How do you communicate when you do not agree or like what others have said?

Define terms; Give examples and discuss. Introduce and discuss “I” statements. Discuss pros and cons of the terms. List the benefits/drawbacks to being assertive personally-socially, academically, and mentally.

Relate topic to one area of your life (school, socially, personally, academically, emotionally)

Books that heal and cope

Throughout Group give reminders that next group is the last group (preparing group for termination)

Homework

5 Minute relaxation techniques

The above steps were chosen for the group and the article listed below addressed the ASCA standards and is titled Seen and heard: Teaching kids to stand up for them, written by Lisa Lawmaster Hess. The article encouraged the right times to be assertive or non assertive. As well as communicating effectively with one’s surroundings and to improve by having a positive well being of self. Teaching assertiveness is important because it’s a life skill. And with all of the choices and challenges that our students face today, they need to know how to stand up for themselves and their beliefs in nonthreatening ways (Hess, 1997). Many well-known books on effective communication highlight the positive correlation between communication effectiveness and assertiveness ( ) therefore books were included in the group session. In fact the term assertive behavior has come to be viewed synonymously with communication effectiveness” (site ). In doing that it may take standing up for one’s self, being disliked because of that decision as well as. Ultimately, as noted by Hess (1997) they need to be problem solvers who have equal respect for their own rights and for those of others.

Relational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) which allows the group leader to use role plays, explore assertiveness, cognitive restructuring and relaxation techniques. As well as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (which connects with REBT) which will help students learn life skills and address specific present as well as future problems through as emphasis on self management skills (Erford, 2010). These techniques were selected because they best demonstrated the ASCA standards in terms of increasing one’s personal/social development.

Session 2

Title of Group: Ok, your turn!

Review Ground rules: Summary of last Group

Discuss Completed Homework

Demonstrate mastery of skills learned previously through role play, and interactions

It’s Just Right Game

Relate reading to Topic

Celebrating our differences (accepting our differences culturally, individually, personally and so on)

Mastery of Relaxation Techniques

Post Test (students calculate results, compare and contrast previous scores)

Termination of Group:

This would involve telling students how well they worked together, how they demonstrated that they knew this was the last group. We would talk about what a special day it was, how much we achieved, and our feelings about saying goodbye to each other. Affirm things we learned and discuss how to use these skills in the future. Address challenges to ending group, fears and remind them the skills are reachable and doable, they just need to continue working at it and remind them it’s a process, just like journeys start with one foot so does being assertive, one step and day at a time. Discuss goals met and mini goals they want to set for them. Celebrate our growth, individuality, and our differences, our rights to our feelings, our openness, trusting the process and being acceptable to new ways of viewing self. Lastly, celebrate that we did it we met this goal and from here on can meet other goals.

The second article chosen addressed the group needs’ from above. It seems that low assertiveness and high anxiety in students simultaneously creates educational dysfunction, cessation of learning, ability weakness and decrease in aptitude. It not only endangers students' psychological health but also deprives them of a healthy life (Worley, 1997). The article is written an a resource to help bridge the gap of cultural understanding for those using assertiveness training with ethnic minority clients (Wood & Mallinckrodt, 1990). With that said the standards that most helped students relate and or understand individual differences and cultural differences in communication, as well as cultural sensitivity relate to personal and social development. This article’s goal is to improve the student’s grasp and give a worldwide view of the situation without excluding minority populations. The ASCA standard that will be developed during this session is PS: A2 Acquire Interpersonal Skills (PS: A2.4). Therefore the theoretical orientation used for this Group will continue to include Relational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), Reality therapy and Behavior Cognitive therapy (CBT). Robertson (2010) noted that learning assertiveness skills and rehearsing them mentally or in role play exercises taking things in gradual steps and stages and monitoring the evidence realistically can lead a “corrective experience.” In other words putting negative thoughts about reactions to things out of your mind (disconfirming thoughts) in order to disprove them was a form of “behavior experiment.” Therefore it seemed fitting to use REBT, Reality and CBT to make that connection. Changing learned behavior by changing thinking patterns, beliefs and perceptions. Practicing the skill, then engaging in real life “here and now” situations and conquering setbacks that made being assertiveness impossible or too stressful. “I can’t do it, they will hate me.” “I will hurt their feelings if I do not agree”. I can’t say no, but I do not want to say yes, I guess it’ll be okay to do what they want,” “No, I have no opinion” and or other self defeating talk.

3. ASCA Standards and core academics for Session One

Standard A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others (7.04, 7.05, and 7.14).

P.C.1.1 Understand how to make adjustments to strategies that are not effective in making decisions or solving problems.

EI.C.1 Use creative strategies to make decisions and solve problems as well as

ASCA Standards and core academics for Session two

P.C.1.2 Analyze strategies you have used in the past to determine the...

P.SE.1.2 Use self-determination to build independence...

PS: A2 Acquire Interpersonal Skills **(**Recognize, accept and appreciate ethnic and culturaldiversity).

4. The article makes it clear that assertiveness or disclosure is one of the most important and fundamental social skills which are part of behavioral and interpersonal skills. It seems that low assertiveness and high anxiety in students simultaneously creates educational dysfunction, cessation of learning, ability weakness and decrease in aptitude. It not only endangers students' psychological health but also deprives them of a healthy life (Worley, 1997). It is important to know that assertiveness training is a structural intervention which is used for social relationship improvement, anxiety disorder therapy, and phobias in children, teenagers and adults. (Mehrabi, 2009; Taghavi, 2009; and Attari, 2009). With that said the standards that most help students stand up, improve personal-social development, academics and reduce anxiety and conflicts was selected. As aspiring counselors, teachers, and or specialists it’s important to stay current with theories, articles, techniques, and intervention programs to as proactive and preventive measures. The current research and findings are indicators of concerns to come, while the theoretical orientations help professionals address the concerns and provide treatments and or solutions and new ways, or lessen or alleviate those problems and or concerns.

**Component #3 Ethical, Legal, Multicultural**

1. It is important to remember that counseling and working in groups in a school require permission from family and they are entitled to inquire about the counseling and results. It is true they can only be informed about their child, this can sometimes pose concerns and parents may try and back counselors I a corner demanding to know about everyone in how their issue or issues in the group relate to others and therefore cause problems for their child.

2. A consent form was created for the group and will be attached and submitted by due date.

3. It is important as well to be culturally sensitive to the needs and differences of others, so

easily it is to get caught up in generalizations and or stereotypes. In counseling, counselor should be aware of their biases and able to address others acting inappropriately especially as it relates to miscommunication. Through standards blending is a practical approach for the counselors to adapt to the academic and cultural needs of each unique school community. Culturally sensitive standards blending interventions show promise in establishing an overt alignment of the school and the counseling program and the direct connection with the mission

(Schellengerb, 2008).

4. Professional school counselors have dual leadership roles related to termination. Leaders

prepare students for the process of termination using various organizational and interpersonal

skills. Then they foster a sense of closure for the students as they move the students through

the termination process (Elroy, 2010).

**Component #4: Program Evaluation**

The pre-measure for **session one** related to the school counseling content is listed below:

**Pre-measure Question:**

Okay everyone focus now, I need you to go back in time and think of a situation in which you wish you would have acted more assertively. Now, what would you have done now and would you have acted the same of differently before this session?

a. The same, which is flight

b. The same, which is fight (verbal aggression, physically or emotionally)

c. The same, which is speak up, or stand up to the situation

d. Different, which is verbally destroy them

e. Different, which is use your voice to express yourself in a confident manner while respecting

self and others.

**Post-measure Question:**

The post-measure for **session one** related to the academic core content is listed below

After reading at least one assertive book used or discussed in group, what do you say to a shy student who is failing Math and Language Arts because they are all group projects?

a. Call a meeting with all group members and discuss her concerns.

b. Complete all the work on her own and inform group members she has turned in the

assignment.

c. Tell someone. (e.g. teacher, parents, counselor, etc), let them handle it

d. Drop the class

e. Tell them off and threaten to “make them pay for it later”

The pre-measure for **session two** related to the school counseling content is listed below:

**Pre-measure Question:**

When having difficulty with others you become frustrated when trying to express yourself, or having others understand you and or listen, what are some ways you relax?

a. Ignore them and do what I’m doing

b. Count to five, relax your breathing and try one last time to explain what you are talking about and let them decide what they will do

c. You stay stress free

d. Call on your higher spiritual power to forgive you for not being patient

e. Admit defeat, just forget it

**Post-measure Question:**

The post-measure for **session two** related to the academic core content is listed below

What would you tell others who are having problems with being assertive?

a. Have you ever thought about assertive training?

b. It gets better, just hang in there.

c. Offer a book title about assertiveness

d. Actively listen, encourage, emphasize, give input, then feedback

e. I know what you mean; I had the same problem, good luck.

3. It is important to evaluate the program to see if the need is true and the steps to address the need(s) measurable, appropriate, fixable, and or able to be corrected. The professional counselor works closely with the needs of the school, the child, the families and district to improve situations academically, as well as personal-social development. It is important to weigh the outcome of such programs to satisfy the schools mission.